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LETTER

TO A

Rev.
By William
Cough

Friend in the Country,
Attempting a *Solution* of the
Scruples & Objections of
a *Conscientious* or Religious
Nature, commonly made
against the *New Way* of
receiving the *Small-Pox*.

By a MINISTER in BOSTON.

Lu'e 6. 9. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing, IS IT LAWFULL TO SAVE LIFE, OR TO DESTROY IT?

Acts 5. 38, 39. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these Men, and let them alone: for if this counsel, or this work be of Men, it will come to nought: But if it be of GOD, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against GOD.

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MDCCKXI.

To my *Friend* in the *Country*.

S I R,



THE new Method of receiving the Small-Pox by *Incision* (or *Inoculation* as 'tis commonly call'd) has been, you know, the Subject not only of plentiful Discourse, but of angry Debate and fierce Contention among us in this Town. And it is a very unhappy Circumstance attending us here, that almost every thing that is now done or doing among us, if it be at all of a publick nature, creates Heats and Animofities. I am in hopes our good People will by and by be sensible of the folly and mischief of this, and come to such a Temper as will suffer them to *differ* from one another without being *angry* with one another. In the mean time, I hope that the People in other Towns where

the Distemper has made its Entrance, will preserve a better Temper, if any among them should put this Method into Practice.

HOWEVER some among us may appear against it out of Party and Prejudice, or make an *Engine* of it to serve Designs, not friendly to the Peace and true Interest of the Place, yet there are many who are *Conscientiously* averse to it, I believe; and, if these preserve the *Meekness of Wisdom*, they are (as a very Reverend Person has lately said of them) greatly to be commended and honour'd in that they will not act against a doubting Conscience.

I perceive that the Scruples and Objections commonly offer'd by People here, have such a force upon your Mind, as keeps you from going into this Method which may be your Safety and Preservation. Now *Friendship*, (the Offices of which should be sacredly regarded by us,) obliges me to attempt to relieve and help you, in a Matter wherein your *life*, so precious in it self, and deservedly dear to me, is so much concerned.

FOR Satisfaction about the *Safety* of this Method in an *ordinary way of Providence*, together with the *Easiness* of it, I refer you to the *Observations* on it made and publish'd by the Reverend Mr. Colman; of the greatest part of which Matters of Fact by him related, I have my self been an Eye witness.

But

BUT that which you want Satisfaction about is, the *Scruples* and *Objections* of a *Conscientious* or Religious Nature, which are commonly offer'd by People against this Method. These, I shall endeavour to answer and resolve, as I am able, in a few words; and if they afford you any Light or Satisfaction respecting the same, you may communicate them to whom you please; and if it should be tho't worth while to make them public, I think none can censure me for starting out of my Line, or meddling with what is none of my Business, since the thing I am now upon relates to *Religion* and *Conscience*.

ONE great thing urg'd against this Practice is, *That it is not lawful for me to make my self sick when I am well: Or voluntarily to bring a Distemper upon my self.* To bring Sicknes upon ones self for its own sake, is what no Man in his right wits would do. But to make my self Sick in *such a way*, as may probably serve my Health, and save my Life, and with such a *Design* is certainly fitting and Reasonable, and therefore lawful. This is every day practis'd among People without any Scruple, in Purges and Vomits, and other things in Medical Use. Now, if I may lawfully make my self Sick by taking something in at my Mouth, why not by putting something in at my Arm? Or, if I may lawfully make my self Sick for *one day*, why not for *two days*,

or more, as the Case may require ? Aye, but this is to bring a *Distemper* upon my self. I think it can *hardly be call'd* bringing it upon my self, when the Case is so with me, (not having had the Distemper, and living in an infected Air) that I can't but expect to undergo it in a very little time. I know indeed GOD can preserve me from the Infection, but when my Neighbours all round me are visited, I know of no *Warrant* that any particular Person has to expect an *extraordinary Preservation*. He that has no reason to think, but that he is as liable to the *Small-Pox* as other people are, and yet keeps in the Way of it, *expecting that God will preserve him untouch'd*, however some may give it the Name of Trust and Faith, and the like, I cannot but look upon it and call it *Presumption*. In short, I can't but think, when I am in such Circumstances, that I cannot *rationaly nor warrantably* expect to escape the Distemper, it is *then* lawful for me to bring upon my self a *lesser* Degree of it, to prevent a *greater*. I'll put the Case thus, If I have not had the *Small-Pox*, it is to be supposed, there is in my body, what I'll call the *Fuel* of that Distemper, and there only wants the lighting of a *spark* to set this Fuel on burning. The Air I breath in is full of these Sparks ; and I may expect *every Breath* I fetch to draw some of them in : If now it appears upon daily Experience, that making an Incision in my *Arm*, and letting the Spark in that way, the Fuel will burn with less fierceness and

and consequently danger ; why may'nt I take it in that way ? Why must I needs stay till it come in at my *Mouth* or *Nostrils*, or thro' some of the *porous Parts* of my body ? For my part, I think the Law of *Self-Preservation*, which is *GOD's Law*, requires me to take this Method of Safety, whereby (to use the apt Words of another,) the *Disease* is, thro' *GOD's* common Blessing, happily converted into a *Remedy*.

WHAT then, will you not wait *GOD's Time* for it ? They ask. I think *then is the Time* Providence calls me to this Method of Safety, when I am in imminent and *immediate* danger of the Distemper the other way. Should any one go into the Practice of Inoculation, out of a fancy or *Bravado*, without his being in known hazard of the Distemper by the common way of Infection, I should not think it warrantable. But *then is GOD's time* for us to use means of Safety, when we are in *apparent danger* of any deadly or destructive Evil.

BUT then, 'tis ask'd again, *What can't you trust GOD ?*—I suppose every body will allow that the Use of Means is not inconsistent with Trust in *GOD* ; and why there can't be Trust in *GOD* in the Use of *this* means, as well as other, I cannot imagine. *Why, it is a going from GOD to Man*, some say. What then, can't we make Use of Men and Means in a time of danger without going from *GOD* ? If any,

like *Asa*, look to the *Physician*, and *not to the LORD*. they are very irreligious and profane therein. But if any do *principally* and in the first place seek to GOD, may they not then innocently and lawfully make use of the *best humane help* the Providence of GOD affords them? I must profess and declare on the part of many of the Inoculated, that they and their Friends concern'd in them, have gone into the Practice with *many Prayers* to GOD, and other suitable expressions of *Trust and Devotion*.

BUT still some say, this Practice looks to them like *taking God's Work out of His hand*.—Indeed this Distemper can arrest none without a Commission from God. But yet it is not inflicted by God's *immediate hand*; we receive it in a *natural way*, and by means of *second Causes*; and *this we do in the Way of Inoculation*, as well as of common Infection. If we have the Small Pox in either of these ways, it is still the Work of God: For all second Causes depend on and act under Him the first Cause. And, *the Application of Means natural for this or that End, is it not an Application to the God of nature*? If God does not co-operate by His *actual Providence* can the Effect be produc'd? For, *who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not*? What is there of the hand or power of *Man* in this Work, after the Incision is made and the matter apply'd? The Work is

still left with God, and we must wait upon Him for His actual Influence and Blessing, even as the Husbandman does for the Rain and Shines of Heaven, after the Seed is thrown into the Earth.

BUT the Small Pox is a Judgment of God, sent to punish and humble us for our Sins; and what shall we so evade it, and think to turn it away from us? I fully agree to it, that it is a sore Judgment of God upon us for our Sins, which we have much deserv'd: And it is greatly to be lamented that it has no better Effect upon the hearts of Men ———. But is it Unlawful to use means for our Preservation from a desolating Judgment? Especially, if at the very time that God sends the Judgment, He shews us a way to escape the Extremity and Destruction at least, if not the Touch of it. If a gracious God shews us so much Mercy as this under the Judgment, does it become us to put it away from our selves, or rather should we not accept it with Adoring Thankfulness? If this Town was to suffer an Inundation, that would be a more terrible Judgment than this, and we should look upon it too as a righteous Punishment for our Sins; yet would any refuse to make use of a Boat, or a Plank that might providentially come in his Way, thinking that to do it would be a criminal Evading the Judgment? I know not, BUT, some have said to me, This Method tends to take off the fears of this Distemper from the Minds of people; and who knows of what Spiritu

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Spiritual Advantage these fears might be to them? In Answer to it I ask them, Whether GOD cannot make the *Mercy* of their Preservation and Recovery in this Way of Spiritual Advantage to them also, and by that *lead them to Repentance*? And, I truly hope, the Salvation of GOD bestow'd upon some in *this way*, as well as the other, will have a gracious sanctifying Effect upon them, under the powerful working of the Spirit of Grace. I was glad to see the serious Frames *some of them* were in at the very time, how much affected they seem'd to be with the favour of GOD to them; what a good Profession of holy Resolution, some of them made. And I would take this Opportunity to call upon them from GOD to remember the same, and to be daily performing their Vows.

SOME Object against the Practice because of the Unhappy Consequent of it among us; the Feuds and Contention, Sin and Mischief that it has occasion'd. — Of this, I hope, I am a mournful Spectator; And it has made me sundry times ready to take up that Wish, *that I had Wings like a Dove!* And I must freely declare, that I look upon that Spirit of Party and Division that is reigning among us, to be a sorer Judgment of GOD upon us, than the Distemper which has so distress'd us. But yet, I am far from thinking that the Badness of the thing in it's self is to be argu'd or infer'd from this Effect of it. For does not

at the same Effect attend many other things unquestionably *good* in themselves; such as the building of Houses for the Worship of GOD, the Choice of Ministers, and of Persons to serve in the State, &c? Nay, the very preaching of the Gospel in the World, tho' it be the Gospel of *Peace*, and the Gospel of *salvation* too, has been, and is, *accidentally*, thro' the Corruption of Mens hearts, and under the influence of the envious Enemy of Mankind, the Occasion of all this; according as our Saviour has foretold that it would be, saying as Mat. 10. 34, 35. *Think not that I am come to send Peace on Earth: I came not to send Peace but a Sword. For I am come to set a Man against his Father, and the Daughter against her Mother, and the Daughter-in-law against her Mother-in-law. And a Mans foes shall be they of his own house.*

SOME frame an Objection against this Practice from the Decrees of GOD. They say that GOD has *predetermin'd* and *fixed* the Period of every ones life, beyond which nothing shall protract; so that if this time be come Inoculation will not save the Persons life. But this Argument may as well be urg'd against the Use of all *Physick*, nay even of *Food*, as against this Practice. I truly believe, as my Bible teaches me, that GOD has *fix'd* the Period of every ones life; but I also believe that He has done it with a regard to *second Causes*, or that Course of Nature which He has *establish'd*; the *End* and *Means*

Means are determin'd together. He that has fix'd in His own Counsel how long we shall live, has also determin'd that by such and such means our lives shall be continu'd to that Period of time. And how does any one know, but this is to be the *appointed Means*, of their Preservation in life?

SOME have ask'd *Whether we could assure them their lives in this Way?* It is strange that any should put the Question! When there is none can give the Assurance of this *not in the most innocent and common Means* that are every day made use of: Why then shou'd they demand it in *this*? I know of one who died under a Vomit. Another, whom I also knew, died by pulling out a Tooth; the bleeding at the Gums after the Extraction of the Tooth could not be stopt, and in a few hours he died. And for my own part, as much as I am now for Inoculation, I am not at all shy to say, that a Person may miscarry under it: For *GOD is Sovereign*, and will keep us in a dependance upon Him in the use of all Means. But if it be safe under the *common Blessing* of GOD, that is sufficient to warrant me to venture upon it, when there is Occasion. Nay, if one in an hundred should die in this way, while there is *Demonstration* (as there *then* would be) that it is *ten times* as safe as the common way of infection. This, I humbly conceive, would be sufficient to justify my going into it: Tho' I must confess, in this particular, I was once of another mind.

BUT

BUT suppose I should die in the way of Inoculation, would it not make a dying hour very dark to me, to think that I us'd means to bring it upon my self? This is a Question I must confess, has been the most affecting to me, of any that have related to this matter. But after the most serious consideration I have bestow'd upon it, I thus think; "If a Person should die under Inoculation, he dies in the Use of the most *likely* means, he knew of, to save his life in a time of common peril; he dies *then* in the *Way of Duty*, and so in GOD's *Way*: If the Blessing is deny'd, he must humbly resign this his frail life unto the GOD of it, Looking for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto *Eternal Life*.

THERE is one thing more said against this Practice, which I am loth to take Notice of, because of the——of it; but it being so frequently in the Mouths of People, I cannot but name it. 'Tis this, *that it is originally from the Devil*. Sure this is the effect of *Transport, &c.* I will return a better answer to it than it deserves. If it be a *Method of Safety*, and a *Benefit to Mankind*, as hitherto it appears to be, how came the Devil to be the Author of it? Was he ever a *Benefactor* to Mankind? No: But he is a *Murderer from the beginning*. Every Age of the World produces some *new* and useful Discoveries in one Profession, Art and Science or another: And, if this Disco-

very

very be reserv'd for our Day, why should it not be accepted *in all places with all Thankfulness*? In a word, I cannot but think, it's Original deriv'd elsewhere, because my Bible teaches me that *every good & perfect Gift comes down from the Father of Lights.*

As to that Objection of the danger of others catching the Distemper of the Inoculated, there needs only this to be said; That as 'tis to be suppos'd, the Practice will not be gone into till the danger of Infection becomes common in a place, so there may be Methods easily taken to prevent its hazarding others that can't yet come into it. And I think there ought to be a prudent Care in this respect.

Thus, *my Friend*, I have freely given you my Tho'ts about this Practice so *much spoken against*. I must now leave you to judge for your self; praying GOD to *shew you his Way*. If you come into the Practice, I know you will not do it in *carnal Security*; for that may provoke GOD to deny the Blessing. And, if GOD please to give it the desir'd Success you'l religiously give Glory to Him; not only for delivering you from *Death*, but for saving you from such a *bed of Corruption*, as others have many *wearisome days and nights* appointed them in; you'l think your self the more oblig'd to thank and praise your *kind Physician* (I mean the *Great One*) who has wro't your *Cure by so gentle a Method*.

I have no more to add but my Prayers, that you and I may be made meet for, and, in GOD's time, bro't safe to, that World where there shall be *no more Sickness, nor any more Death* ; where Sin, and all the penal Consequences of it, shall be done away for ever.

I am,

Your hearty Friend & Servant.

Boston, Novemb.

20th. 1721.



I have no more to add but my Prayers, that
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Wm. Rogers.
Nov. 1741.



